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ABSTRACT

This handbook is intended to assist public school administrators and members of boards of education to deal with changed perceptions of women in vocational education administration. It consists of five main sections. Section 1, which covers barriers inhibiting the progress of women in administration, addresses the following trends: self-concept, career choice, career preparation, employment, and ambition. Section 2 describes such supports aiding the progress of women in administration as self-motives, credentials, university choice, training, social networks, and visibility. Section 3 contains a brief summary of literature and a selected bibliography. Section 4 contains a discussion of factors affecting women seeking administrative positions. These are interpersonal factors, career aspirations, advancement opportunities, role conflict, administrative capabilities, mobility, experience, training, recruitment practices, hiring practices, and conclusions of an Illinois study on sex equity in vocational education. Section 5 presents recommendations to eliminate the underrepresentation of women in vocational education administration. Questions designed to identify discriminatory practices and suggestions to aid women seeking administrative positions are provided. (A handbook for women on equitunity in vocational education administration is available separately through ERIC--see note.) (MN)

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Equitunity in Vocational Education Administration: A Handbook for Administrators and Members of Boards of Education

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Abstract

This publication is a comprehensive guide to assist public school administrators and members of boards of education to deal with changing perceptions of women in vocational education administration. The handbook also includes a synthesis of findings concerning barriers and supports of women in administration and recommendations to be considered to eliminate the underrepresentation of women in vocational education administration. The topics addressed in the handbook include:

Introduction

Barriers Inhibiting the Progress of Women in Administration
- Self Concept
- Career Choice
- Career Preparation
- Employment
- Ambition

Supports Aiding the Progress of Women in Administration
- Self Motives
- Credentials
- University Choice
- Training
- Social Networks
- Visibility

Summary of the Literature
- Selected Bibliography

Factors Affecting Women Seeking Administrative Positions
- Interpersonal Factors
- Career Aspirations
- Advancement Opportunities
- Role Conflict
- Administrative Capabilities
- Mobility
- Experience
- Training
- Recruitment Practices
- Hiring Practices
- Conclusions of the Illinois Study

Recommendations to Eliminate the Underrepresentation of Women, etc.
- Discriminatory Practices
- Identification—Training—Hiring

Conclusion

This is the first publication of the handbook which is to be disseminated to public school administrators and members of boards of education desiring information relative to training and hiring women for vocational education administration.

Introduction

Women are underrepresented in administration generally and certainly in vocational education administration. Statistics generally show that women are not rising from the teaching ranks into the administration ranks in proportion to their numbers. Unfortunately, some women who have been promoted into the administrative ranks find themselves retained in entry level positions and/or in positions devoid of authority.

What then are the barriers to their progress?

What supports can be afforded women to help remove the obstacles to progress?

A research team at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale reviewed pertinent literature and reseach studies and found some commonalities regarding women who seek administrative positions and those women who have attained administrative positions in vocational education.

Equitunity is sex equity in vocational education—giving women and men the same chances and choices. It is providing equal educational and career opportunities; erasing existing stereotypes in counseling, programs, and materials; and making educators, administrators, and students themselves aware of habitual sex-role bias. It is removing artificial limits and allowing anyone to plan and pursue any goal—not as "male" or "female," but as a person.

Equal opportunity cannot exist in an environment that does not foster and nourish it. Parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators must continuously work together to create an environment in which females and males feel that their career opportunities are not limited by their sex.

Barriers Inhibiting the Progress of Women in Administration

The barriers facing women who seek administrative positions in vocational education cannot entirely be attributed to the female experience nor to male behavior and beliefs, as is often popularly thought. Rather, cultural and social conditioning and long standing norms have also strongly influenced and continue to influence the current vocational education environment.

Self Concept

Self concept and perception of societal beliefs create problems for women. Our Western culture has socialized females to be passive, noncompetitive, and nurturing. Subtly, females have been taught to avoid success and to accept mandates of total responsibility for home and family. Consequently, rather than dealing with their own needs and ambitions, women often feel they should avoid personal success in order to fulfill the perceived expectations of others. This role conflict may involve her superiors in the educational community, her mate, her children, or perceived societal pressures as a consequence of achievement.

Career Choices

Research shows that women find it very difficult to make objective career choices. Zakrajsek (1976) reports that while receiving minimal parental support and/or encouragement from the educational community, women find it difficult to plan career goals. Unfortunately, there are relatively few women administrators available to serve as occupational role models or mentors for aspiring women administrators.

Career Preparation

A review of literature also provides documentation of another important barrier, i.e., a lack of preparation for administrative positions. This lack includes the psychological and academic preparation necessary for leadership positions.

An area of concern for many students is financial aid. Bowers (1979) suggests that lack of financial aid may be directly related to the reason that some women do not complete academic programs. Women have not had an equal opportunity for financial support while attaining academic credentials necessary for an administrative position. Zakrajsek (1976) cited the G.I. Bill as an example. The G.I. Bill aided many men; however, women did not have an equivalent source of funds. Other researchers also point to disparities of scholarships and grants awarded, or to the rule at many universities that require full-time attendance in order to receive financial aid.

Certainly other factors impact on academic preparation. Included are these factors: discriminatory admissions policies and practices, rigid course timetables, lack of adequate day-care facilities for a student's young children, and academic sexist attitudes.

Employment

Hiring and promotion practices affect not only the initial appointment but also affect future opportunities for advancement. Traditionally, administrative positions have been "sex-typed" as male.

Cronin and Pancrazio (1979) reported that males still dominate school boards in numbers. Other studies suggest that many board members and superintendents still prefer men for administrative positions. Research does not suggest whether or not the community would prefer a male or female administrator. It is fair, then, to speculate that board members and administrators do have a dilemma regarding roles for women and regarding expected behaviors of men and women. No doubt, on numerous occasions school board members feel that the community does not want a female administrator. There is always the "humanitarian" consideration which suggests that possibly a female administrator would displace a male head of household and lead to his unemployment or underemployment.

Paddock (1978) suggests a strong disposition against hiring a married woman for an administrative position. There is some evidence to suggest that male administrators are not convinced that married women can handle the combined responsibilities of marriage, home, children, and administrative position. However, there seems to be an equally strong disposition against hiring a single woman, since it is assumed these women will marry and leave the profession and/or move away.

Ambition

Another major problem area detected in various studies defines the inconsistencies of perception by male administrators and board members relating to women's ambitions and goals in life.

Sites (1975) reported that vocational education directors viewed female teachers as having only moderately high career goals. Makulski (1976) found that superintendents feel that women prefer the classroom to the administrative office. On the other hand, Baughman (1977), in a Detroit public schools study, found that approximately one-half of the women surveyed indicted they were interested and felt qualified to obtain an administrative position.

Anderson (1977) confirms that women, just as men, indeed seek promotion to administrative positions for the same social motives that meet higher order needs for achievement, recognition, responsibility, growth, and service. Anderson (1977) substantiates that women do clearly define and accept their career goals.

Supports Aiding the Progress of Women in Administration

What assistance then can be afforded women to help remove the obstacles to administration? Who will provide the necessary support? Certainly much can be done and in fact much is being done.

Self Motives

First of all, women need to look at self. One's interpersonal barriers must be overcome by honestly changing attitudes, life priorities, and capability assessments. Anderson (1977) stated that indeed many women have a strong conviction that career, marriage, and family can successfully be combined.

Credentials

Researchers have found that women can gain much support from attaining the proper academic and social credentials. Cronin and Pancrazio (1979) recommend that women obtain graduate training and necessary academic credentials associated with leadership.

All have acquired transferable skills. For women especially, those skills need to be assessed and then an exploration of individual talents can be conducted. After an individual has made the assessment and has outlined goals for self, a plan of action can be initiated in order to attain the necessary credentials.

University Choice

Zakrajsek (1976) suggests that it is important for women to seek a university of high quality. Other researchers also indicate that women should seek universities that have a reputation for according respect to women students. Women might seek universities that accord fair and equitable admission policies and distribution of financial aid to their female students.

Training

Systematic graduate training with an emphasis in administration is called for in a number of studies. Another suggestion regarding training includes concentration in verbal and written communication. Internships and in-service training have also been cited as important credentials.

Social Networks

Social credentials cannot and should not be ignored by women aspiring to vocational education administration. Writers repeatedly document the need for support in terms of role models and mentors. Women have not sought the help of others to the degree that men have. Terms such as "networking" and the "old boy network" are not unfamiliar terms, but women have traditionally tried to achieve positons without aid and support. Cronin and Pancrazio (1979) suggest that women must learn to ask for help and not view such requests as a sign of weakness.

Visibility

Many researchers such as Costick (1978) firmly believe that there is a critical need for women, while becoming more visible to their professions, to build coalitions, support each other, and share experiences. Visibility can also be achieved by writing for, researching for, traveling with, belonging to and participating in professional organizations. Other strategies include involvement in projects and tasks in which one can demonstrate abilities and competencies.

In order to gain visibility, other suggestions include: join male oriented groups and work with men as equals, submit ideas, do not be afraid to express the worth of talents, have an open mind, listen, take responsibility for self and for actions, relocate to achieve goals, take initiative to use resources, be articulate in stating decisions, be persistent, keep a sense of humor, ignore unfounded criticism, learn a sport, keep physically fit, learn to be competitive, do not interpret every negative or unpleasant act as sexism, and always be clear about playing the role of a woman's advocate.

Support is also available in terms of federal and state legislation. Only within the last decade has an acceleration been observed regarding legal equity issues. Women can be instrumental in the development of affirmative action plans and programs in their respective schools. They can insist that legislative materials be routinely distributed to all faculty members, and they can monitor the dissemination of information regarding position vacancies and hiring practices.

Summary of the Literature

The socialization of males and females to act out certain roles and to behave in either a feminine or masculine manner has certainly contributed to the present environment of vocational education. This phenomenon has been reinforced in society for many years. However, today vocational education is in a state of change. This task of changing attitudes and behaviors is not easy. Therefore, it behooves each person to become introspective because research shows no valid reason for the small number of women in vocational education administration except the attitude of the educational community. Studies do not confirm a lack of interest or qualifications. The talent pool is large enough to warrant larger numbers of women in vocational education administration. The problem of underrepresentation is not solely a woman's problem. Both females and males are responsible for a climate of acceptance for women in vocational education administration.

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Factors Affecting Women Seeking Administrative Positions

The following is a synthesis of the research study entitled "Models Of and For Women Aspiring To and In Vocational Education Administration." This research project was conducted by a research team at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale during the school year 1979-1980.

Questionnaires were mailed (1) to all women identified on Illinois State Board of Education records as being either (a) practicing vocational education administrators or (b) administratively certified teachers, thus potential vocational education administrators, and (2) to a matched sample of men throughout the state of Illinois. All data from respondents of the survey were categorized and are discussed by groups as follows:

All Persons

All Administrators
- Female Administrators
- Male Administrators

All Teachers
- Female Teachers
- Male Teachers

This section of the handbook attempts to analyze and communicate the perceptions of surveyed teachers and administrators on the issue of women vocational education administrators in Illinois. The findings were carefully compared to issues identified in the preceding national review of literature. Differences of perception between Illinois findings and national studies are reported when these differences are notable. The final recommendations of this handbook are based on both the national review of literature and analyzed data obtained from the research conducted in Illinois.

Interpersonal Factors

Interpersonal factors discussed in the research study include the attitudes of individuals as well as the attitudes of society at large regarding the role of women. It is in this area that females moving into nontraditional roles have encountered many problems. Attitudes are of paramount concern to all interested in supporting women administrators in vocational education.

All groups surveyed, female and male, agreed that their community's attitudes and traditions make it more difficult for women than men to attain vocational education administration positions.

All groups also agreed that women's politeness does not prevent them from expressing themselves effectively as vocational education administrators. However, there is division of thought over whether both women and men vocational education administrators are judged according to the evaluator's personal views of appropriate sex roles. Men administrators and teachers agreed while the women teachers and administrators disagreed that both men and women vocational education administrators are judged according to the evaluator's personal views of appropriate sex roles.

Career Aspirations

An aspiring vocational education administrator needs to demonstrate a high degree of career commitment and to readily accept responsibility. Much has been written to suggest that one reason women are underrepresented in administration is that many women are not sufficiently committed or willing to accept the responsibilities required for effective leadership. An analysis of the Illinois study refutes many of these claims.

Female teachers, as a group in Illinois, indicate that vocational education administration is a lifetime career goal for them. An analysis of a subsequent questionnaire item indictes that all persons, as a collective group, feel that women do take their careers in vocational education as seriously as men and are not afraid to give up job security in order to attain an administrative position. The study substantiates that an increase in salary is one reason qualified women teachers would like to move into vocational education administration.

Advancement Opportunities

Despite the fact that some women have moved into administrative ranks, some researchers contend that women administrators generally hold lower status positions than men administrators. Illinois female administrators and female and male teachers reported that women vocational education administrators generally hold lower status positions than men vocational education administrators; however, Illinois male administrators did not agree with the statement.

The groups were divided in their opinions of whether federal equal opportunity mandates had impact on the movement of women into vocational education administration. Female administrators and female and male teachers agreed while the male administrators disagreed with the statement: "The movement of women into vocational education administration positions is directly related to the federal equal opportunity mandates to improve the status of women in general."

However, all groups agreed to a statement asserting that in terms of hiring and promoting, men in decision-making positions are more likely to recommend men rather than women.

Role Conflict

Much has been written about various conflicts women encounter while seeking identity in various roles. However, all participant groups in the Illinois study are in agreement that women can successfully combine professional duties and the management of a home.

There was agreement by all groups collectively on a related issue of role perception, i.e., that females relate as well with female vocational education administrators as they do with male vocational education administrators.

Administrative Capabilities

Do women have administrative capabilities? Assertions have suggested that women are too emotional, can't handle job pressure, lack skills, or do not want administrative responsibility. These assertions are strongly questioned if not denied by participants in the Illinois study.

Illinois teachers and administrators agreed that male vocational education administrators cannot handle job pressures any better than the female vocational education administrators. An analysis of subsequent questionnaire items indicates that persons surveyed feel very positive that women are as likely as men to assume greater responsibility; furthermore, women are perceived as possessing the necessary leadership skills to do an effective job. Conversely, there seems to be a consensus that women administrators as a general rule are no more demanding and hard on their subordinates than men administrators.

It is interesting to note that females in the teaching ranks are likely to perceive male board of education members as holding the position that women cannot handle emotional and physical stress. Administrators, female and male, as well as the male teachers tended to disagree that male board of education members hold this perception. However, other related issues in the questionnaire lend evidence to suggest that women can cope with physical stress.

There was strong agreement by all groups that compliance with state and federal equity laws strengthens the leadership role of a vocational education administrator in the eyes of those with whom that person works.

Mobility

A charge frequently made is that one reason many women are not promoted to administrative positions is directly linked to the issue of mobility. The Illinois study confirms that female vocational educators tend not to move from one school district to another more often than men holding equivalent positions.

Experience

The notion reported nationally that women must work harder than men with similar talents and qualifications in order to achieve a vocational education administration position is neither confirmed nor denied by the Illinois study. The respondent groups are divided on this issue. All administrators, female and male, as well as female teachers agreed that women are required to work harder than men to attain an administrative position while the male teachers denied that this statement is true. However, female administrators and teachers agreed and male administrators and teachers disagreed with a statement asserting that men are often considered for vocational education administration positions with minimum professional experiences, whereas women are considered only when they possess numerous years of professional experiences.

All respondent groups reported that women in vocational education are encouraged to seek advanced degrees. One reason for the encouragement is because women are perceived as likely to remain in the work force for an extended time period.

Training

One questionnaire item attempted to lend insight into leadership development programs within school districts. All participant groups agreed that their school districts do not have active leadership development programs to assist in identifying persons for vocational education administration positions.

Recruitment Practices

Recruitment and subsequent hiring practices not only affect the initial appointment but also impact upon future opportunities for advancement. Issues relating then to the recruitment of women for vocational education administration are critical. In this portion of the study there seems to be a paradox concerning affirmative action programs and affirmative actions within school districts of Illinois.

The Illinois study acknowledges that within school districts there is affirmative action to eliminate sexism. However, when the respondents were asked about specific practices, there appears little substantiation that affirmative action is present. For example, all groups, female and male, disagreed that active recruitment of women for vocational education administration is part of the school district's practice. Likewise, the female and male teachers agreed that the school district's superintendent is more likely to encourage applications from men rather than women for vocational education administration. But, in terms of dissemination of legislative enactment information, only female teachers felt this information was not routinely posted.

Hiring Practices

A critical issue directly responsible for the underrepresentation of women administrators in vocational education relates directly to hiring practices. An analysis of questions on these issues indicates the survey sample divided on most issues. Basically, it appears female teachers feel they are not given as much encouragement or consideration for administrative positions as is afforded their male counterparts.

Female teachers contended that they cannot rely on male administrators for formal recommendation in order to move into vocational education administrative positions. Female teachers also felt the board of education in their school district would hire a male over an equally qualified female; however, all administrators, female and male, disagreed with this assertion.

There was general agreement on two issues. All groups, female and male, agreed that selection and screening committees are dominated by men and that men in decision-making positions were more likely to recommend men rather than women when hiring or promoting. In addition, all groups do not perceive the employment of women in vocational education administration as leading to the displacement of male candidates.

Communication

The Illinois study also serves to refute other assertions regarding women and communication. The Illinoisans surveyed, all groups, teachers and administrators, concluded that women are *not* too emotional to communicate effectively as vocational educators and that female administrators do relate equally well with female and male teachers. This study also leads to the conclusion that women vocational education administrators communicate as effectively with people in the community as do their male counterparts.

The data also imply that communication does not break down because of sex-role stereotyping in vocational education. In addition, the participants felt that men do not dominate communications as was reported in the national literature.

Conclusions of the Illinois Study

The responses support the theory that within Illinois there exists a professional, certified talent pool of women committed to the career goal of vocational education administration. Furthermore, the women are willing to accept the responsibility of leadership while managing various other aspects of their personal lives.

This study has served to question, if not to dispel, some traditional stereotypic views of women in general. In terms of communications, women administrators in vocational education are perceived as effective communicators with people in the community as well as with other women and men in vocational education. This study also suggests that women can cope as well as men with emotional and physical stress.

Illinoisans served to confirm other studies in the nation that indicate men are still predominately recruited and encouraged for administrative positions. Female teachers perceive individuals in authority as preferring to hire or promote males.

Unfortunately, this study does not provide concrete data to suggest that affirmative action exists within the school districts in Illinois. While the study acknowledges that affirmative action exists, there is no substantiation of actual practices.

Recommendations to Eliminate the Underrepresentation of Women in Vocational Education Administration

The Illinois study confirms that a pool of potential candidates for vocational education exists. Female candidates are very committed to an administrative career and will readily accept the responsibility. What then can women and men administrators and school board members do to help achieve their goals as vocational education administrators?

First of all, equal opportunity and affirmative action must be operationalized. There is awareness of legislation and the legal definitions of laws. However, a distinction must be made between legal equal opportunity and real equal opportunity. Real opportunity exists when the most qualified person is chosen for the job.

Attitudes of the educational community, as well as the general community, have traditionally favored men in terms of training. There is a critical need for training programs for women so that they can have real equal opportunity under the law. In order to gain the real opportunity, women must have access to various training programs, i.e., internships, in-service training, etc. Affirmative action then implies taking those steps necessary to help women prepare themselves for vocational education administration.

Will the educational community identify those women who have demonstrated their competence and potential and help women teachers to learn and grow beyond the classroom? The following recommendations should be considered affirmative actions for the purpose of providing real opportunity to women aspiring to vocational education administration.

Discriminatory Practices

Initially, all administrators and school board members should recognize that discriminatory practices are a problem for the profession. This is not just a women's problem; this is a problem of equal opportunity of human resource allocation and development.

It is necessary to determine how discriminatory practices are communicated in each school district. Administrators and school board members might consider the following:

1. What are the attitudes of this community regarding a female administrator?
2. What are my personal attitudes regarding sex role and a female administrator?
3. Does this district treat women teachers differently than men? And, if so, how?
4. Why are men more often recommended for administrative positions?
5. Can this district continue to afford to exclude a vast talent pool of women from administration?
6. Does this district truly want a climate of acceptance for all humanity in our educational community?

Identification—Training—Hiring

Women in each school district must be identified as potential administrators and provided opportunity to participate in training programs. Both long-range and short-range programs of assistance to women and concomitant programs to convince women of the administrators' willingness to hire qualified women administrators are important. The following suggestions might be considered for incorporation in a leadership program of assistance for women.

1. Teachers and counselors within the school district should encourage girls to consider administrative positions in education.
2. Various sessions for men might be conducted for the purpose of raising awareness of attitudes and practices.
3. In-service training programs for all staff members should be held to assist in changing sex role attitudes, utilizing specially trained personnel provided through the Illinois State Board of Education.

4. Female teachers should be encouraged to participate in professional organizations.
5. In-service training programs should be designed to assist in career development; various topics might be considered, assertiveness, public relations, decision-making, time management, etc.
6. Individual administrators should identify capable aspiring women administrators and serve as a sponsor or mentor.
7. Opportunities should be provided for aspiring women vocational education administrators to gain visibility. For example, provide opportunities for women to serve internships or apprenticeships.
8. Women educators should be urged to prepare themselves for vocational education administration.
9. Active recruitment of women for vocational education administration positions should be undertaken.
10. Schools should serve as a model employer advocating the complete use of human (female and male) capabilities.
11. School board of education members need to encourage females to run for board membership.

Conclusion

A real challenge exists in our public schools despite feelings of acceptance or unacceptance of women in vocational education administration. It is a challenge for the educational community to set precedence and place into practice what has long been taught in our classrooms—reason, knowledge, and intellect. So long as discrimination and stereotyping are practiced and perpetuated, no one can be assured of quality of education or equality of opportunity. In our public schools equal opportunity is a democratic issue but do democratic practices exist? Can the public schools continue to afford the exclusion of precious potential, reduced educational effectiveness and certainly a lower return on the taxpayers' dollar? Can the public schools expect a harmonious and effective educational system without the complete use of human resources? After all is said, the inclusion of women in vocational administration is not only a legal issue, a social issue, but also an economic and humanistic issue.